

On one street corner, they're waving American flags, donning red, white and blue hats and shirts, and singing the national anthem. About 10 minutes later, on the opposite corner, another group starts chanting at the first group, "Go back to Canada! Go back to Canada!"

Only in a debate about health-care reform could such a scene make any sense.

With debate over President Obama's signature domestic policy issue, health-care reform, continuing to heat up like a Southern California summer, hundreds took to demonstrating outside Rep. John Campbell's office in Newport Beach Monday afternoon.

On one side, outside the office on Newport Center Drive near Fashion Island, stood hundreds of proponents for reform, who considered themselves the new "silent majority."

Silent, that is, not so much by choice, but by a lack of ears to hear them.

"This is because people are frustrated. No one's been able to get their voices heard," said Valerie Blomquist, one of the protest's organizers. "We just want to have open discourse."

Blomquist's and others' criticism of Campbell specifically is that he has not hosted a town hall-style meeting where the public can voice their concerns to him in person.

"He has not held a town hall per se, but [Campbell] has been all across the district hearing his constituents' concerns," said his spokesman, Brent Hall. He said that Campbell has met with many groups in his district who have invited him to discuss health care, and he's arrived at one conclusion.

"The proposed plan is directionally opposite of where the congressman thinks we should be going," Hall said.

Not to be outdone, Campbell supporters and health-care reform proposal opponents stood across the street for their own anti-demonstration demonstration. The messages among that group were as varied as the proponents' were unified.

Some questioned Obama's citizenship and claimed a grand Communist plot to take over the country.

Others perpetuated ideas of the since-debunked "death panels" claim some Republicans in Congress have been slow to distance themselves from.

But a majority, when not calling proponents socialists or shouting, "Freedom yes! Obamacare no!", said their biggest concern was growing the federal deficit and putting health care in the hands of a government they see as incompetent.

"We're fighting for our freedom of liberties and choice," said Linda Dorr of Laguna Hills. "Obama's being dishonest about what the cost is going to be. Let's have reform, just not rationing of our health care."

Back across the street, the protesters, who outnumbered the reform opponents at least two to one, shouted "Not takeover, but choice!"

On the opposition's side, Bonnie Morrison of Newport Beach said she's all for people having a choice in health care, even a public option, as long as it doesn't affect her.

"I believe in health-care reform. But I want to keep my own personal health care," she said. "Let's just do it in a rational way. He's trying to take away my insurance and I'm happy with [my insurance]."

"We're all going to pay higher taxes. Now is not the time to tax the 'wealthy,'" she added. "They're all going to leave the state."

Martin Deutschman of Lake Forest held a picket sign with the late Sen. Kennedy's picture on it.

"I believe in true competition," Deutschman said. "I'm here to let people know we need to have a public option included. The dream of Sen. Kennedy continues, and it's not only good for the nation, but in his memory."

Terry Contreras of Santa Ana disagreed with any public option to help the millions of uninsured in the country.

"Who gives them that right? Where is that in the Constitution? Health care is not a right," she said.